

AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY: HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT
RESPONSIBLE CONTACT: DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES
POLICY IDENTIFICATION: NON-FRATERNIZATION POLICY
EFFECTIVE: 05/2022

Virginia Union University strongly believes that a work environment where employees maintain clear boundaries between employee personal business interactions is necessary for effective business operations. Although this policy does not prevent the development of friendships or romantic relationships between coworkers, it does establish boundaries as to how relationships are conducted during working hours and within the working environment.

Due to their status as role models, their access to sensitive information, and their ability to affect the employment of individuals in subordinate positions, individuals in supervisory, managerial, or executive roles and those with authority over other's terms and conditions of employment shall not pursue, have, or maintain a romantic or sexual relationship with any subordinate directly in their line of reporting.

This policy does not preclude or interfere with the rights of employees protected by the National Labor Relations Act or any other applicable Virginia statute concerning the employment relationship.

1. The provisions of this policy apply regardless of the sexual orientation of the parties involved.
1. Employee means a person employed by the University, in any capacity, whether faculty or staff. Graduate assistants are considered employees with regard to undergraduate students enrolled at the University, and as students with regard to other employees of the University.
3. No employee shall pursue, have, or maintain a romantic or sexual relationship with any student.
4. The University discourages romantic or sexual relationships between employees, especially amongst those within the same department and prohibits them between employees in supervisory relationships.
5. During working time and in working areas, employees are expected to conduct themselves in an appropriate workplace manner that does not interfere with others or with overall productivity.
6. During non-working time, such as lunches, breaks, and before and after work periods, employees engaging in personal exchanges in non-work areas should observe an appropriate workplace manner to avoid offending other workers or putting others in an uncomfortable position.
7. Employees are strictly prohibited from engaging in physical contact that would in any way be deemed inappropriate in the workplace by a reasonable person while anywhere on university premises, whether during working hours or not.
8. Employees who allow personal relationships with coworkers to adversely affect the work environment will be subject to VUU's disciplinary policy.

9. Employee off-duty conduct is generally regarded as private, as long as such conduct does not create problems within the workplace. An exception to this guidance, however, is romantic or sexual relationships between supervisors and subordinates.
10. Any supervisor, manager, executive, or other university officials at VUU must disclose the existence of a romantic or sexual relationship with another coworker. Disclosure must be made to the Director of Human Resources and Talent Management. HRTM will review the circumstances to determine whether any conflict of interest exists.
11. When a conflict of interest or potential risk is identified due to a University official's relationship with a coworker, VUU will work with the parties involved to consider options for resolving the issue. The initial solution may be to make sure the parties no longer work together on matters where one is able to influence the other or take action for the other. Matters such as hiring, firing, promotions, performance management, compensation decisions, and financial transactions are examples of situations that may require reallocation of duties to avoid any actual or perceived reward or disadvantage. In some cases, other measures may be necessary, such as transfer of one or both parties to other positions or departments. If one or both parties refuse to accept a reasonable solution, such refusal will be deemed a voluntary resignation.
12. Failure to cooperate with VUU to resolve a conflict or issue caused by a romantic or sexual relationship between coworkers or among managers, supervisors, executives or others in positions of authority in a mutually agreeable manner may be deemed insubordination and will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.
13. Where doubts exist as to the specific meaning of the terms of this policy, employees should make judgements based on the overall spirit, ethical standards of VUU, and intent of this policy. Any concerns about the administration of this policy should be addressed to the Director of Human Resources.

Student Contact

There are circumstances in which employees work with students that have other potential for the exploitation of the students.

- a. A student may be asked to perform services that go beyond the normal student relationship; providing childcare for a faculty member's children for example.
- b. A student may hold an employment relationship with the University and be asked to perform services that are beyond the normal scope of the student employment; running a personal errand for a staff member for example.
- c. In all such cases, it must be clear that:
 - The student may decline to perform such additional services without any adverse consequences,
 - If accepted, the student must provide the assistance voluntarily and receive a fair wage for those personal services, and
 - The student's choice to perform or not to perform such personal services shall have no impact or relationship to the continuation or evaluation of the student's regular University employment.

Even where there is no such relationship, employees are expected to exercise a high level of professionalism and caution when interacting with students or with graduate assistants. Avoid situations that may be misinterpreted by the student, graduate assistant, or other parties. Some examples would be:

- a. Avoid private social events such as a one-to-one dinner with a student.
- b. Do not share a hotel room with a student or graduate assistant when traveling for athletic or other events.
- c. Do not make inappropriate jokes.

Violations of this policy are considered to be unprofessional conduct and may be grounds for disciplinary action with consequences up to and including termination of employment for administrators or staff members or dismissal for cause in the case of faculty members.

There may be exceptional circumstances in which the spouse, partner, or family member of a faculty or staff member is a student at the University; or, a relationship that pre-exists the enrollment in or employment at the University. Such exceptional circumstances or relationships must be reported to the Director of Human Resources and Talent Management at the time of employment or enrollment. Under no circumstances will an employee be permitted to supervise another employee involved in such a relationship or a family member.